

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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REF: CANBERRA 6826 (DTG 220502Z SEP 76)

1. THE FOLLOWING FRONT PAGE STORY APPEARED IN THE OCTOBER 1
EDITION OF THE AUSTRALIAN.

QTE. VICTORIA LIKELY TO GET CONTROVERSIAL NAVIGATION AID

OMEGA - FIVE AREAS NAMES

\$10 M BASE WILL BE FINAL PACIFIC LINK

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QTE FIVE LOCATIONS ALONG THE COASTLINE OF GIPPSLAND, VICTORIA,

HAVE BEEN SELECTED AS LIKELY SITES FOR THE CONTROVERSIAL UNITED STATES OMEGA NAVIGATION BASE IN AUSTRALIA.

QTE. THE FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT HAS PICKED THE FIVE SITES - ALL IN THE GIPPSLAND ELECTORATE OF THE COUNTRY PARTY MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, MR. NIXON.

QTE. THE WORLD-WIDE NETWORK OF OMEGA BASES BEAMS DIRECTIONAL RADIO SIGNALS TO HELP AIR AND SEA CRAFT PIN-POINT THEIR POSITIONS IN ALL WEATHER.

QTE. THE AUSTRALIAN BASE WILL COST ABOUT \$10 MILLION AND WILL BE THE FINAL SOUTH SEAS LINK IN A NETWORK COVERING HAWAII, JAPAN, NORWAY, TRINIDAD, THE U.S., ARGENTINA AND THE FRENCH ISLAND OF REUNION, NEAR EAST AFRICA.

QTE. THE GIPPSLAND LOCATIONS STREACH ABOUT 275 KM FROM AROUND YARRAM IN THE SOUTH TO MALLACOOTA IN THE NORTH.

QTE. THE OMEGA PROPOSAL HAS BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL ISSUE SINCE AUSTRALIA WAS APPROACHED TO TAKE THE SYSTEM IN 1967.

QTE. FINAL ARRANGEMENTS ARE FAR FROM SETTLED, ALTHOUGH A FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE IN 1970 AND A JOINT PARLIAMENTARY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IN 1975 BOTH RECOMMENDED PLANS SHOULD PROCEED.

QTE. THE LABOR GOVERNMENT SHELVED THE PROPOSAL FROM 1972 TO 1975 AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL LAST MARCH THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. FRASER, ANNOUNCED THAT CONSTRUCTION WOULD GO AHEAD.

QTE. HE SAID AUSTRALIA WOULD HAVE CONTROL OVER THE BASE.

QTE. OMEGA BASES TRANSMIT VERY LOW FREQUENCY (VLF) RADIO SIGNALS WHICH CAN BE PICKED UP BY SHIPS AND PLANES. BY GETTING A TRIANGULAR FIX THEY CAN ACCURATELY ESTABLISH THEIR LOCATION ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

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QTE. THE OMEGA NETWORK WOULD BE A MAJOR NAVIGATION AID FOR SHIPS ON THE HIGH SEAS, AND THE AUSTRALIAN BASE WOULD HELP COVER THE INDIAN AND SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC OCEANS.

QTE. OPPONENTS OF THE SCHEME SAY THE OMEGA SIGNALS ARE USED BY AMERICAN SUBMARINES, WHICH ARE EQUIPPED WITH OMEGA RECEIVERS, AND THIS COULD MAKE AUSTRALIA A WAR-TIME NUCLEAR TARGET.

QTE. BUT THE AMERICANS HAVE GIVEN ASSURANCES THAT THEIR SUBMARINES WILL NOT USE OMEGA.

QTE. IN MAY, 1975, SEVEN LABOR MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENCE ISSUED A MINORITY REPORT WHICH INSISTED THAT INTERNATIONAL SUPERVISION BE EXERCISED OVER ANY AUSTRALIAN OMEGA SYSTEM.

QTE. SEVERAL KEY UNIONS HAVE THREATENED TO BAN CONSTRUCTION OF AN OMEGA BASE IN AUSTRALIA. THESE INCLUDE THE BUILDING WORKERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION AND THE PLUMBERS' AND GAS-FITTERS' INDUSTRIAL UNION.

QTE. THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT'S INVESTIGATION IS BEING DONE BY A SMALL AUSTRALIAN TECHNICAL TEAM.

QTE. TWO OF THE EXPERTS WERE TRAINED IN THE UNITED STATES.

QTE. AFTER THEY HAVE REDUCED THE POSSIBLE OMEGA SITES TO ONE OR TWO AN AMERICAN TEAM IS EXPECTED TO TAKE OVER AND MAKE THE FINAL SELECTION.

QTE. THE DEPARTMENT HAS TWO OTHER DISTRICTS UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR OMEGA IF THE FIVE PREFERRED LOCATIONS ARE FOUND UNSUITABLE OR UNAVAILABLE.

QTE. THE MALLEE-WIMMERA REGION OF CENTRAL-WESTERN VICTORIA, BOUNDED BY MILDURA IN THE NORTH, BENDIGO IN THE EAST, ARARAT IN THE SOUTH AND THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN BORDER IN THE WEST. ONE TOWN IN THE AREA, BOORT, HAS ALREADY ASKED FOR THE OMEGA BASE.
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QTE. MACQUARIE ISLAND, THE NORTHERNMOST AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH BASE.

QTE. MACQUARIE ISLAND IS REGARDED AS THE BEST SITE TECHNICALLY, BUT IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE RULED OUT BECAUSE OF THE PROBLEMS OF CONSTRUCTING AND SERVICING IT IN THE REMOTE ANTARCTIC. END QTE

2. COMMENT: THIS STORY STRENGTHENS OUR BELIEF (REFTEL) THAT TRANSPORTATION MINISTER PETER NIXON INTENDS TO LOCATE THE OMEGA STATION IN HIS ELECTORAL DISTRICT.
HARGROVE

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